

Contributions



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"Christ's Message to Thyatira"

Text: Rev. 2: 18-29.

The message of Christ is particular. It will be noticed that he did not give a general message to the seven churches of Asia and leave them with that, but to each he sent a special message of rebuke, of encouragement and of exhortation.

As has been already noticed in case of the churches previously addressed, the message is sent by Christ in the character suited to the particular need of that church. To the church at Thyatira the message comes from "the Son of God who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass," suggesting the fact that His eyes look thru all pretensions to the real state of affairs and that with his feet of brass he will judge those who by wicked works mar the beauty and efficiency of his church.

Christ is a watchful intercessor, a fact we as his people are too prone to forget. We sometimes wonder, when evil flourishes and wicked men come as wolves within the churches, whether God has forgotten. Let us doubt no more. This epistle to this early church, now long vanished from the place of its testimony and work, teaches, as do all these epistles, that the eye of the Savior is much less sleepy than ours, and his care as constant as law. It is His church as well, yea more, than ours. We labor for a few years for a church; Christ bought it with his own blood. We care for its welfare with a finite and often short sighted care; but Christ with the care of infinite wisdom. We are anxious about it; our care being often mingled with doubt and fear, Christ, on the contrary, cares for it with a care in which there is no worry, rebukes it with no cry of despair, but with the yearning and hope of One who knows and whose faith does not stagger. And yet he cares,—cares in a better than human way, with a love and wisdom divine and matchless. Brethren, in our care of the churches let us not forget that there is One greater than any or all of us watching with a solicitude for deeper, for

wiser, with a faith far stronger and is pleading as of old with the angels of the churches.

This message of Jesus to the church at Thyatira naturally falls into three divisions.

I. The commendable qualities of the church. II. The faults of the church. III. The reproof and encouragement.

First, Thyatira's good qualities. She was a church of works, of love, of faith, of ministry, of patience and of progress in good works.

Certainly a record, this, not to be ashamed of. She was not a lazy church. Her members were workers. Not half of them seeking their own welfare, and letting the other half do the work of the church. On the contrary, they were building on the foundation, good works in private life, and in doing good to others in the face of a hostile pagan community. She was a church full of love. Her members loved God, and did not forget to love Christ who had redeemed them from the sins of heathen darkness. She was at peace with herself. The brethren and sisters were of those of whom the pagans said, "See how those Christians love each other." They did not turn their backs to each other, or look the other way when they met, but clasped each other's hand with a grip which said more loudly than words, "God bless you." They did not talk evil of each other, but defended each other's reputation when it was assailed, until there was evidence to the contrary. The strangers who came to worship with them were greeted with a smile and look which said, "Glad to see you here, but O, how I wish you would forsake your heathen darkness and come to the Savior."

It is true they were men, not angels; heathens redeemed from the sins wherein they had walked, by the love of Christ, but they were men and women of faith. They ceased to doubt that the right would triumph. O, these Christians who don't know whether Christ will triumph or not! Jesus can not say of them, "I know your faith." They have none. These Christians of Thyatira did not doubt that Christ died, rose again, had ascended to God's right hand. They believed. For had not a miracle been performed, in their conversion from a life of bondage to the vilest religion of the ancient world or from the depths of the profoundest skepticism and joyless existence?

That was a miracle for them which made the resurrection an easy probability, that their whole nature was so changed that they loved what they had formerly hated and were coming to be in some small measure, at least, like Him of whom the apostles and preachers told them. And if Christ could do that with them why could he not do it with a world if given enough time? They had faith in Christ. Why the present skepticism among church members as to the ultimate victory of right and Christ over wrong and Satan? Because they have no faith. Faith doesn't stop at obstacles. It moves them. Let us believe more, and trust ourselves upon the strong tide of Divine Law

and rest in the assurance that right and truth shall win.

But their faith was shown by their service, or ministry. They trusted God, they believed right would win, and then, like sensible men went about their tasks to do their part in accomplishing the triumph of right.

Those who sit down with the comforting thought that right will prevail somehow, whether they do their part or not, have an optimism that is not far short of presumption, and are in a fair way to lose what faith they have. They ministered to the needs of the poor among them. The needs of other and poorer mission points were not forgotten by them. They were not too proud to help some one below them in station. Any church which forgets the duty of service will soon get far from the Master. For it was He the divine Son of God who said, "I am among you as he that serveth." Too many of our church members have not learned "the beauty and power of a life of service." They think they have come into church to be ministered unto rather than to minister. But this church at Thyatira was not of that sort. The Lord knew about its ministry. They by love served one another and found true blessedness and happiness in so doing. The church that pleases Christ is the one in which all the members do with their might what their hands find to do. They knew by experience that "He that serveth is greatest of all." And any church which is a church of service will be known and blessed by Christ. When will men and women learn that the church is not a place in which to be spiritually lazy and to have their souls petted and coddled, but rather the place in which they shall serve each other and Christ, and that its pulpit is the source of instruction and inspiration to the end? The sermon is not, as too many church members and even preachers seem to think, an end in itself, but a Christ-ordained means to the instruction of the people in righteousness and methods of service.

This church at Thyatira had as another blessed quality, patience. It is a matter of congratulation to note this characteristic. For it is so notably absent in so many churches and men. Patience, the grace which makes all the others beautiful with the quality of permanence. Patience, which lends endurance to love, steadfastness to faith, and constancy to service. Patience, which makes good works, not as intermittent and fitful child's play, but the steady, constant and continuous work which meets every obstacle with fortitude, which no chilling indifference can balk and which goes on under good report and evil, loved or hated, appreciated or ignored. This is the quality which makes the other graces of this church of the long ago still live and inspire us. It is needed today by the church and church members. Churches need it when it seems that adversity is their portion. They need it when satan whispers that their work in a certain community is done. Church members need this characteristic when satan sug-